

**Testimony of Gerald Arel and Ted Goerner on S.B. 831  
Environment Committee Public Hearing, January 31, 2011**

As a resident of Connecticut and active outdoor sport enthusiast, the ability to access open spaces and enjoy the best that Connecticut has to offer is very important to me. My first backpacking trip was here in Connecticut almost 10 years ago. I spent 5 days on the Nipmuck trail, a 35 mile CFPMA maintained blue-blazed hiking trail running between Mansfield and Union, CT. While I walked, I recall noting the trees, the stones, and the rivers and the bridges that crossed them while I made my way north. I was completely unaware of the property lines crossed as I travelled and in fact the thought of these boundaries never even entered my mind. Residential, commercial, town and state owned lands all passed seamlessly from one to the other silently under my boots.

I believe strongly that the silent passage of boundaries in the outdoors is indeed a privilege, one that everyone should experience. The ability to access and enjoy the open spaces currently available across our state should extend to everyone equally. By restoring recreational liability protection to include municipalities and municipal entities like the MDC, we can continue to stay connected to the outdoors, no matter the landowner. Access would be encouraged, and in many cases, greatly improved as every landowner would be finally be entitled to the same level of protection in keeping their lands open to recreational pursuits. As an avid hiker, rock climber and mountain biker I rely on these spaces to provide recreation, fitness, and time to connect with my thoughts, my friends and my family. The closure of, or limited access to these spaces stemming from the current lack of liability protection is a very critical issue and can be very easily remedied through the passage of S.B. 831, a bill I wholeheartedly support. I urge you to continue to allow outdoor enthusiasts, runners, hikers, climbers, and cyclists the privilege of enjoying the outdoors where boundaries go unnoticed. Let these boundaries slip by silently as we continue to experience and enjoy the open spaces that help define the greatness of our state.

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I am writing to express my support for S.B. 831. I firmly believe that the MDC and similar organizations need greater protection from frivolous lawsuits. This bill would give them the reassurance that they need in order to continue to keep their properties open to public use.

Connecticut has too few open spaces that are large enough to permit the enjoyment of adventure sports such as hiking and mountain biking. Those that do remain need to be protected from the tiny minority of careless and greedy opportunists for the healthful enjoyment of the majority.

Our society is headed in so many wrong directions. Over litigation coupled with lack of personal responsibility is one of those dead end trails. Passage of this bill is one small step towards protecting the human spirit for thousands of Connecticut residents.

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